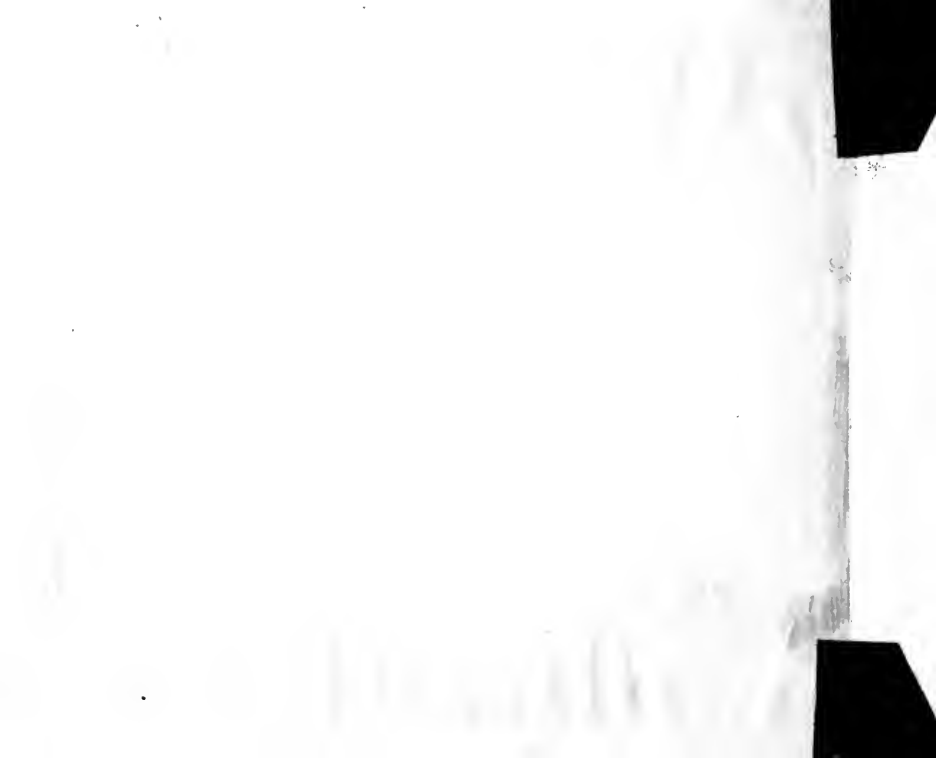


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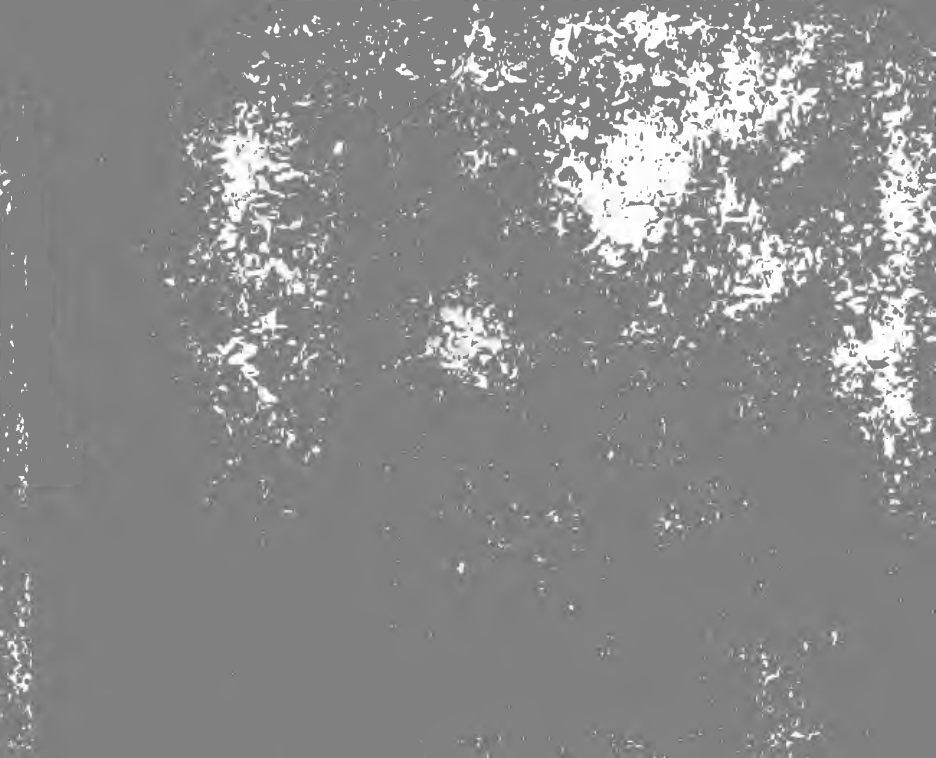
Trippings in Type.

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Journalistic Fumbles.



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Ye Leadenhalle Presse Oblong Shilling-Series.

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Trippings in Type

Being Notes on some Newspaper Blunders, their Origin and Nature ; with
Numerous Examples.

BY
FREDERIC CONDÉ WILLIAMS

III



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PREFACE.



HEY seem going it in France under the new Republic. Fifty prefects hanged in a batch !

It was very hot—some 95 degrees in the shade ; and we were lounging in dreamy comfort in the big arm-chair of that West Indian store. Yet we started.

“ Nonsense !—let's look.”

Well, there it was, sure enough, in black and white, under the heading, "Latest Telegraphic News"—"Fifty French prefects have been hanged."

This set us thinking ; and we conceived our suspicions. They were confirmed in a day or two. The telegram had reached that journal (as very many telegrams reach West Indian journals) from a French source, and in the French tongue ; and some exceptionally brilliant genius had "hanged " the unfortunate fifty right off instead of "suspending " them. The French prefects, after all, had but been "suspendus."

It was only a choice variety of newspaper blunder. Only one of the multitude, countless in number, diverse in nature, that have issued daily from the press for years past, and will continue so to issue for ages yet to come. Only one more

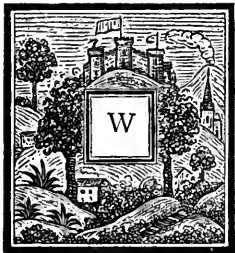
specimen to add to our collection of such newspaper blunders, commenced many years before in the editorial sanctum of an English provincial journal, and elaborated to-day for the benefit of the British public.

May they derive from it some measure of the amusement which it has never failed to afford to its compiler !



CHAPTER I.

THE BLUNDERERS.



E, the Blunderers, were a score or so inside one particular building; and there was all the world of other blunderers outside.

Inside, WE were the Editor, Sub-editors, Reporters, Publisher, Clerks, Head Printer, Readers, Compositors, Machine Men, and small boys, at times termed "devils." Outside, there was all the World that contributed, and all the World that advertised.

Of course, all the world that contributed was not to be held responsible for its blunders, for was it not OUR function to lick the contributions into shape and form worthy of an appearance in the columns of our esteemed "daily"? But as to the World of Advertisers, that was not the same thing; for there is a responsibility about altering that which is presumably paid for to be inserted as sent. The Advertisers may fairly be called upon to bear their own burdens as blunderers.

For instance, to take one or two time-honoured illustrations, who would be justified in playing any tricks with this statement of fact, after its insertion had been paid for over the counter?

A RESPECTABLE YOUNG WOMAN wants
washing.

Or of regulating the business predilections of the bone-mill proprietor who announced that "parties sending their own bones to be ground will be attended to with fidelity and despatch"?

Among the "Wanted," why should any sub-editor have taken the responsibility of interfering with these?

WANTED—A Sorrel Colt, suitable for a Young Lady with a long tail.

WANTED—A Man and his Wife to look after a Farm, and a Dairy with a religious turn of mind without incumbrance.

In the "Births, Marriages, and Deaths" column, a sub-editor was clearly responsible for that unfortunate heading which slipped in one day when he was in a hurry:—"A number of deaths unavoidably postponed," but not for this.

extraordinary Birth announcement which lies before us as we write, extracted from a Glasgow paper only recently,

SHANKS—At 6, Warwick-square West, Carlisle,
on the 11th inst., Mr. James Shanks; a son.
And they are both doing well.

And yet the clerk might have been kind enough to put that notice in proper "form" before he passed it on to the printer. It was too bad of him, and hard upon Mr. Shanks, who may have been chaffed about it.

A mysterious announcement is this from the *Cape Times*, of January 30, 1881; and, surely, for it again the member of the outside public who inserted it and paid for it is solely responsible.

NOTICE.

£5 REWARD. — Whereas some person or persons stabbed my Donkey on the 26th of January, and well-known about Town, and has since died through the wound inflicted. I hereby offer the above Reward to any person giving any information concerning the cruel deed.

WILLIAM CAMERON.

11, Chiappini-street,
Cape Town, January 29th, 1881.

The following testimonial, sent for insertion as an advertisement, might have been altered ; but then the proprietor of the vermin powder was perhaps so good an advertiser that it didn't do to risk offending him :—" A miller writes : ' Two weeks ago I was full of rats, and now I haven't one.' " To the contributor who sent some verses with the heading, " These lines were written nearly fifty years ago by one who

has for several years lain in the grave for his own amusement," the editor was perhaps more merciful, for we have no record of this old story of a blunder being verified by its actual appearance in any journal.

When the *fons et origo mali* is to be found in the advertiser's own bad handwriting or careless penmanship, a delicate question as to responsibility for a consequent blunder arises ; and no doubt the compositor has often to bear the brunt of mistakes which cannot fairly be laid at his door. The *Athenæum* of October 18, 1879, contained an advertisement for an editor for a provincial morning paper, insisting that he must be a writer of "thoroughly Liberal *prices*." A little thought might suggest to the reader that the desideratum was not a journalist who would desire a solid and satisfactory stipend (such specimens being scarcely rare enough to require

unearthing by means of special encouragement to announce themselves), but a newspaper politician of what the advertiser in his manuscript probably described in doubtful caligraphy as of "Liberal *princs*," for "*principles*"—an abbreviation over which the compositor very excusably stumbled.

Let us now turn from blunderers of the outside public to ourselves of the newspaper office. The nightly routine even of a provincial journal, such as ours, afforded in theory substantial guarantees against, at all events, mere *literal* errors. Take the case of the report of a speech at some evening meeting. The reporter, to narrate in brief the history of the business, took his "note," as the original report of the speech is called, in shorthand; and he copied it out into ordinary or long-hand in his cab or railway carriage, or in the newspaper office when he got there. The "copy," as the written manu-

script is always called, passed next through the hands of the sub-editor, who pruned and polished it duly before sending it forward to the compositor, who set it up in type. A "rough proof" was then taken of it by means of a small hand-press (the only surviving true descendant nowadays of Chaucer's press of old), and the first or rough proof, along with the manuscript "copy," then passed to the "readers." These were most important functionaries, and from the nature of their duties they might be regarded as the scapegoats of most of our newspaper blunders. Two readers dealt with the proof and the copy—one read aloud from the manuscript, the other corrected from that, reading the rough printed proof, and marked in its margin all necessary alterations, which the compositor who originally set the type had then to make, the rough proof, as marked by the reader, being returned to him for that purpose. After

correction, another proof, which, being now corrected, was termed a "revise," was taken by the hand-press, and was then despatched to the literary department to pass in review under the sub-editorial eye. The sub-editor might, and very often did, mark this revised proof again for still further corrections to be made by the compositor; but there was a danger, pregnant with blunders, in correcting too much. For, disturbance of the set type to correct one error sometimes brought about another. And, in "lifting out" lines of the type, as set in their metal frames or "galleys," for the elision or re-arrangement of a sentence or a word, it often happened that letters or words, or entire lines of type, slipped their places in the "galley," and got transposed in the line or in the column without the error being noticed until some atrocious blunder in the columns of the newspaper next

morning revealed it to the horrified editorial eye. Such is a very bare outline of the process which, applied variously to reports, news paragraphs, critiques, correspondence, and to the more important editorials or "leaders," converted written "copy" into matter set up in type and ready for the press. And, although the system afforded many safeguards against blunders, yet, with so many possible blunderers at work, there was always a loop-hole for error. And there will be slovenly reporters, and stupid compositors, and over-pressed sub-editors, and careless or "sleepy" readers, to the end of time.

A word in conclusion. We have included machine men as well as compositors in our list of blunderers, for of course every manipulator of types and "forms," as well as of copy, may be found to bear some share of responsibility in con-

nection with accident resulting in blunder. But it is a notorious fact that the one or two more glaring and disgraceful instances of blemish which the columns of the London press have from time to time afforded have been the result, not of accident, but of deliberate spite and malice on the part of subordinate *employés*. With such prepared blunders, we, of course, have nothing to do.



CHAPTER II.

BLUNDERS LITERARY AND GRAMMATICAL.



PERHAPS the best as well as the broadest distinction that we can make between different classes of newspaper blunders is between those which find their origin in the "copy" or written MS., and those for which that MS. is not responsible; in other words, between those of the Editorial and those of the Printing departments. To the former class

belong most of the errors and eccentricities of sentence composition, grammar, punctuation, quotation, and we may perhaps add of word omission, although the compositor is more likely to omit undetected a word in setting type than a writer is in writing out his copy. To the latter, and far more numerous, class of blunders, for which the copy is not directly responsible, but for which the type-setter is, belong the endless jumbles caused by the accidental transposition of lines and words of type in making corrections — the strange conversions of one word into another word, of singulars into plurals and plurals into singulars, and the consequent perversions of sense, often exceedingly quaint and humorous, which result from the chance slipping out or slipping in of a stray letter ; and the out-and-out mistakes as to words employed, which his own ignorance sometimes,

and perhaps as often the illegible nature of the copy he is setting, cause the compositor to make, and which happen to pass the readers undetected.

It will be readily understood that what are styled "rough proofs" in the newspaper office, or proofs which have not passed under the reader's eye, are abundantly peppered with errors of every description. A glance at our collection will suffice. "Songs and itchings" for "etchings" in a literary critique might have discouraged the author if it had been allowed to stand; and a prize "chorus" for "chromo" would have looked awkward in an art notice. The kindly "nurse" for the equally beneficent "muse" was a very material rendering. Actors and actresses are often sorely hurt by the matter and manner alike of newspaper criticisms; but how would Miss Rose Massey's dreams have been disturbed on a certain night

some dozen years ago had she known that her "Magdalen Atherleigh" in *False Shame* was actually in type as "Mug and Water and Raleigh," and this after—in a previous portion of the notice—"Miss Atherleigh" had been mentioned as "Miss A. Bragleigh"? Not less bitter would have been the fair lady's wrath had these distortions actually adorned next day's paper, than our own if the renderings "prepostcroustorous" and "curricatures" of the words "preposterous" and "curriculum" had really remained in the type of a certain leading article of about the same date. "Schools" for "shocks" in the record of an earthquake, and "boots" for "boats" in a report of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, would have been valuable additions to our collection of published blunders had they not been nipped in the bud by a wide-awake reader. We remember being ourself a little

flabbergasted by an allusion in a rough proof to our own highly-esteemed organ as "on the squib." A reference to the copy was essential to the solution of that problem, and then we found that "on the squib" in type stood simply for "on the 8th inst." in copy, and was not a new coinage of slang upon the part of some enterprising junior reporter. Time fails us to tell of all the misprints of our rough collection, which so very nearly became actually perpetrated and published blunders. "Somethink," "horseness" for "hoarseness," "the smoke" for "the snake" in the grass, "loins in quo" for "locus" in ditto, and the "treat" of demolishing the Vendome Column in '71 for the "threat" of that piece of vandalism—such brands just plucked from the burning of publication lie amongst others in type before us. In another rough proof, Joseph Arch is designated "Priest" of the Agri-

cultural Labourers' Union—" Priest " being the compositor's reading of the reporter's abbreviated " Presdt." for " President." We once promised a philanthropical townsman that he should see and correct the proof of an epistolary appeal to charity on behalf of a certain hospital. Only a rough proof was ready when he called ; and his horror may be imagined when he found his " subscription lists " in the banks, transmogrified into " subscription hats," and his final assertion that there was " plenty of time " to aid the cause distorted into the confession that there was " plenty of tin." So much for the rough proofs of our collection. Would that none more serious had survived the reader's ordeal and been sown broadcast amongst that " public," which, to every journal, means its own particular coterie of readers !

A typical illustration of thoroughly hopeless, all-round

newspaper bungling is afforded by a journal which lies before us as we write. The *Burghersdorp Gazette and North Aliwal Advertiser* of July 7, 1882, published to all appearance anonymously at Burghersdorp, Cape of Good Hope, leaves much to be desired from a journalistic point of view, and bears no highly favourable evidence as to the condition of the press in that portion of Her Majesty's colonial dominions. That the quality of its paper should be poor, and its type ancient and consequently somewh at dim, is excusable enough in an out-of-the-way colonial journal; but how are we to account for the unpleasing surprise which awaits the reader of this single-sheet paper, when, after turning over its first page, devoted to large-type advertisements and official notices, he finds pages 2 and 3 reversed and printed upside down? Turning our journal round to suit this new

order of things, we are next mystified by finding that, whereas the date over the leader (consistently enough with the heading of the paper on page 1) declares the issue to be that of "Friday, 7th July, 1882," the heading of page 2 is "Saturday, Juli, 71882." and that of page 3 (in an altogether different type, by the way, to the other heading) "Friday, 7th *June*, 1882," so that there are three conflicting official statements as to the date of this powerful organ, upon one side of the sheet! It is satisfactory, however, to find, on turning over, and once again inverting the paper in order to read page 4, that the journal has at length reached a better mind, and proclaims a final date consistent with that of its front page. Passing on to typographical detail, we discover the same malignant influence at work which apparently played the mischief with the conflicting dates

and inverted columns. Four-fifths of the letterpress is printed in Dutch which would probably electrify a Hollander; but, whether in Dutch or English, advertisement or news paragraph, letters are inverted, omitted, or doubled, and words are run together, with strict impartiality. A warning against trespass upon farms bearing the terrible names "Modderbult and Rehenosterhoek" cautions the public against the commission of that offence "either by shooting"—and there abruptly ends with the bottom of the column, and is discoverable no more! Types are selected without regard to the fitness of things, and a notice of some threescore words; simply announcing that a business man is not leaving Burg-hersdorp as has been stated, is printed in such enormous letters as to occupy nearly two columns of the paper. Such words as "have" and "to" are distinguished by accentuation

on their vowels, and some curious items of news are collected under the comprehensive heading, "Thingss in General," and record such thrilling incidents as the decease of a useful "publicman" and the performances of an "amatetr band." The leading matter of the English department consists in two articles upon the departure of esteemed ministers of the Netherlands Reformed and the Wesleyan Churches respectively. We make an extract in conclusion :

The whole service and ceremony were most expressive, many of the congregation being affected to tears. We, who have had the opportunity of witnessing the career and work of the Rev. old gentleman from his advent known that the work he had done in South Africa if particularised and published would read more like a romance than a reality. He is one of those men the esence of whose life it is to be active and useful in all spheres. To the Albert Accademy his services have been invaluable.

To return to the more immediate subject of our chapter. The *New York Times*, about 30 years ago, afforded one of the best illustrations which our collection includes of a genuine reporter's error finding its way into the paper. Describing the obsequies of William Poole in New York in 1855, the *Times* reporter wrote : "The procession was very fine, as was also the sermon of the minister." As an afterthought, he inserted in his copy, by a caret, the words "and nearly two miles in length" after "fine," forgetting that they would also apply to the latter part of the sentence, which accordingly read next morning in the paper :

The procession was very fine, and nearly two miles in length, as was also the sermon of the minister.

A terrible instance of sub-editorial carelessness or ignorance

or both, was afforded by the *Eastern Daily Press* after the recent Bray Colliery disaster, which was shortly followed by the interment of the venerable *littérateur* John Payne Collier, in the churchyard of another Bray. The *Eastern Daily Press*, however, collating its news from a newspaper paragraph having reference to the latter event, thus tortured it into an application to the former :

THE BRAY COLLIERY DISASTER.—The remains of the late John Payne, collier, were interred yesterday afternoon in the Bray churchyard, in the presence of a large number of friends and spectators.

What are we to say to the following perplexing announcement from the *Birmingham Daily Post*?

SIGNOR MARIO'S CONCERT.—This concert takes place to-night (Friday), and not yesterday, as was erroneously announced.

Or to this instance of the dire effects of *over* punctuation from the same thriving paper :

He called attention to the number of ownerless dogs about the streets, and urged that the police should have instructions to destroy them, or order dogs, with owners, to be muzzled.

Instances of ludicrous errors resulting from defective punctuation, presumably in the copy, and from careless grammatical construction, are, of course, abundant. We will quote a few old ones at random :

The captain swam ashore from the vessel and subsequently saved the life of the stewardess; she was insured for fifteen thousand dollars and was full of railroad iron.

During the celebration a child was run over, wearing a short red dress, which never spoke afterwards.

A man was knocked down at the station yesterday by a coal train while drunk.

Printers, or rather compositors, with all their faults are hardly prone to interpolate words by accident. It must have been the reporter who was originally answerable for the following, in a recent issue of the *Glasgow Weekly Mail*:

MAN KILLED ON THE RAILWAY.—On Sunday forenoon the dead body of a man was found lying on the railway between Bearsden and Maryhill in an unconscious state, but still alive. He was conveyed to the Royal Infirmary, but on reaching that institution he expired.

A remarkable case of concurrent misquotation, which may

have been the fault of either compositor or reporter, occurred on November 16, 1882, in Pietermaritzburg, Natal. The Chief Justice of that Colony, in the course of a judgment delivered the day previously, used the ordinary phrase "rolling in wealth," yet neither of the two "dailies" of the town could get it right! One, the *Witness*, rendered the phrase "rolling in health," the other, the *Times of Natal*, "flowing in wealth." So much for the perverseness of ingenuity with which blunders sometimes seem to be perpetrated.

Quotations are dangerous weapons for public speakers who aim to be properly reported, because, even if the reporter gets them correctly, the compositor is pretty sure to flounder over them, and then, if reader and sub-editor are caught napping, the results are often distressing. The too liberal use of foreign words or phrases in a descriptive report is on similar

grounds to be deprecated. There was a tradition in our office, when the compiler first entered it, that "In the course of the evening the band performed some choice *morceaux*" appeared in the paper "In the course of the evening the band preferred some choice Bordeaux," but we were unable to secure that valuable specimen for the collection, so do not vouch for its genuineness. However, we distinguished ourselves, when Herschel was buried in Westminster Abbey, by announcing that "round his grave was gathered a most distinguished company of servants"—servants standing for *savants*. The *Natal Mercury* of June 18, 1883, recommends a volume of Registered Designs of Cabinet Furniture, which, had been sent for review, as a book which should "possess close interest for all who like their *hares* and *penates* to be ornamental as well as useful." "Poppies and *cigarettes*" for

“aigrettes” are described as among the choicest Parisian adornments for bonnets in the *Natal Witness* of August 8 1882. A Mauritius paper of September 8 following is jocular about “le pantalon pour dames, ou le ‘divided shirt’ de lady Harberton.” The *Jamaica Gleaner* of the very day previous, in a programme of music to be performed at Up Park Camp, had the wondrous item, “Valse ... Toss jossis oss Jamais ... Waldteufel”: of course, for “Toujours ou Jamais.” And in another concert programme from Natal which lies before us it would be hard to recognise the “Song and Chorus—‘Lo, hear the Satire of my Sire,’” were not the words added—“from the Grand Duchess.” An American journal is said to be answerable for printing “O tempora! O mores!” “O temperance! O Moses!” and it is a tradition that the *Washington Chronicle* of very many years ago greatly

disgusted one Curtis, a "patriot," by rendering his "*Ubi libertas, ibi patria*," in an oration on the unveiling of the Sedgewick Monument at West Point, "You be *libertas*, I be *patria*." A signal illustration of this class of blunder was published by the *Falmouth Gazette* (Jamaica) of September 21, 1880, in a tailor's advertisement, addressed to the "*Beau Moude*" of the Island, assuring them that the "*Bou tou*" of Paris, England, and America shall be carefully studied in the cutting department of this establishment: and yet all three mistakes depended simply on the substitution of the letter *u* for *n*.

To return from errors of quotation to errors of carelessness, or ignorance, sporting readers of a well-known journal some eight years since might have been mystified by observing the horses at Longchamps Races on one occasion described as

having been ridden by their own sires. The distinguished foreigner who presided over the Parisian destinies of the newspaper at that period had gone down in person for once in a way with the press ticket to the Longchamps tribune, and, his acquaintance with "Le Sport" being of a strictly limited nature, had confused the names of the sires in the "c'rect card" with those of the jockeys! The compiler lectured twice on behalf of a charity in Natal upon the subject of this little treatise; and perhaps, as a final instance in point of the class of newspaper blunder arising from carelessness, we may be permitted to conclude our chapter with an extract from the *Natal Mercantile Advertiser* of June 13, 1882:

NEWSPAPER BLUNDERS.—We have much pleasure in calling attention to the lecture this evening by Mr. Williams, on "Newspaper Blunders." The lecture is

really a good one and well worth listening to, so that we hope there will be a large attendance. Between £20 and £30 were taken at the doors in Maritzburg, where Mr. Williams last delivered the lecture, and *every one of them went away satisfied.*

The italics are our own.



CHAPTER III.

BLUNDERS OF LITERALS.



ONE of the most marvellous facts in connection with the subject of newspaper blunders is the immense difference to the sense of a sentence which may depend upon one single letter, and, where the transformation effected by such simple means results in changing the original sense, not into mere utter nonsense, but into

other sense, or into nonsense with a method in it. The result is a blunder often well worth recording. Sometimes, indeed, the results of a very simple substitution are so ingenious that it is hard to avoid a suspicion as to the purely accidental nature of its origin. When the unfortunate cow was described by a reporter as killed by a railway train, was it indeed mere chance, or sly humour, which substituted a *c* for an *h*, and cut the poor cow into "calves" instead of into "halves," in type? When the *Pall Mall Gazette* only the other day headed a political article "Mr. Gladstone as a "Force," was it again simple accident which converted the *o* of Force into an *α*, or was some enemy in the camp, some facetious Tory of the composing-room, to blame for it? The *Washington Chronicle* before quoted is accredited with accusing Governor Steward during the Civil War of raising a little

“hell” on entering his office, and it was only the indignant remonstrance of that functionary which elicited the fact that the *h* of hell was a substitution for *b*. We were staggered once to read in the *London Standard* (of August 25, 1882) of some Hibernian geese which, after a long journey, were rendered poisonous through becoming “petrified,” and it looked like one of the many Irish pleasantries of the day till some one suggested that the first *e* of petrified stood for *u*. “Dudley’s *house* was seen galloping furiously away with foaming sides,” from a serial story in the *Natal Witness*, and “Mr. Gibson carefully locked up his *horse*, which is a wooden and iron building” (*Natal Mercury*, Nov. 12, 1883) may be said to cancel each other; as may also the “Importation of *deceased* Animals,” the heading of a paragraph in the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* some years ago, and “The

Diseased Wife's Sister Bill," a line in the contents bill of the same journal. "Friends of the *dress* circle" for the "*press* circle" (*Birmingham Daily Post*, Oct. 11, 1870) was a suggestive misprint in an account of a presentation to a newspaper man who happened to have been previously an actor. Old age generally brings a desire for rest with it : but for the *Windsor Gazette* (Aug. 20, 1881) to speak of potatoes as our "old and *tired* friends, the tubers," seemed funny till the *i* and the *r* in *tired* changed places. The *Times* once (Aug. 18, 1871) endowed "a venerable-looking old gentleman with a long gray *board*," and the same powerful organ on Feb. 13, 1872, contained the following advertisement, which the simple transposition of the figures 1 and 8 rendered singular :

A RESPECTABLE YOUNG PERSON WANTED,
age about 81 or 19, as HOUSEMAID, and to wait at
table. Apply between 10 and 12 at 40, Queen's
Road, Bayswater.

It was shocking to find so staunch a supporter of Church and State as the *Standard* speaking on May 9, 1871, of "the *curse* of disabled clergymen," unless, peradventure "curse" was "cures" transposed, as the context might suggest; and almost equally surprising was it to observe a provincial organ of Toryism (*Birmingham Gazette*, April 7, 1871), describing the Purchas judgment as "the most important ecclesiastical *delusion* of our time." But, for "delusion," "decision" probably appeared in the copy. A Committee of the Society of Friends, formed for supplying wheat and other seed to the victims of the Franco-German War, could hardly

have been delighted at finding itself described in one journal as furnishing "arming produce" — "arming," of course, standing for "farming," by the unfortunate omission of an *f*. But, oh! those omissions! Has the young lady who sent to the editor for publication some verses about her birthday, ever forgiven him for that never-to-be-sufficiently-regretted blunder which turned their heading "May 30th" into "*My* 30th"? "Great Capture of Wales" and "Oiling "the Wales" are two headings from Jamaica papers which grace our collection—"Wales" being in the first case a misprint for "Whales," and in the second for "Waves." When, in July, 1871, Major Arbuthnot asked a question in the British House of Commons as to a field battery taking part in the Bushey Park Review, the readers of the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* (July 7, 1871) must have been scandalized to find

Sir Henry Storks replying that "there were *women* taken "into the battery for the purpose of attending the review," till they found that "women" was a misprint for "no men."

To pass for a moment from gay to grave, "the law of *Brazil*" for "the law of *burial*" is not a bad misprint from the last-mentioned journal, which is also answerable for referring to a deceased Dean as "the much-lamented *Dead* Alford." Sad as the subject is, it is impossible to repress a smile at the strangely-simple misprint perpetrated by the *North British Advertiser* of April 22, 1882, which, after describing a child's falling into a bath of hot water in the nurse's absence, goes on to say that the poor little boy was "so fearfully "*scolded* that he died almost immediately." Even the association of ideas between scolding and getting into hot water can hardly be pleaded in extenuation of such a blunder

as this. "The chairman *denied* that the motion was carried" is rather a serious statement when it is discovered that "denied" is a misprint for "decided" (*Birmingham Gazette*, June 14, 1871).

Miss Edith Wynne, a charming vocalist and patriotic Welshwoman, who sang at a concert in Birmingham on Nov. 11, 1870, was surely indignant next morning to find that the same *Gazette* had referred to the "clear tones of her "sweet *Irish* voice," and even the explanation that the word "Irish" was a misprint for "fresh" may not have sufficed to console her. Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd, sometime M.P. for Plymouth, in a speech on religious teaching in Board schools was reported in the *Birmingham Post* of June 14, 1871, to assert that "if a man took his stand on the *table*, he must "honestly explain what he believed to be its meaning," a

rather obscure utterance, till it turned out that "the table" was a misprint for "the Bible." Readers of newspapers in the Midland metropolis about the year of grace 1871 must, indeed, have been pretty "'cute" to weather all the shoals and quicksands of blunder which beset the local journals of that day. In a paragraph from one of those dailies, representing Dr. Darwin as giving us "asses" for ancestors, they would probably have self-respect enough to read "apes" for "asses." Her Majesty's Most "Humble" Privy Council they might still hold as "Honourable," offers of "meditation" to be "mediatory"; and policemen "ignoramusly," to be really "ignominiously," dismissed the local force. A teacher's power of "masticating" (for "inculcating") religious truth would, however, rather stagger them; and they would surely recoil with a sense of horror from the description of a

reverend pastor at Dudley as a "poacher" of distinguished ability. The *Jamaica Gleaner* of March 26, 1881, paid a delicate compliment to its sable readers by informing them in a classical quotation that "NEGRO" gave away ninety-seven million dollars in presents to his friends, "Negro" being, of course, the Emperor "Nero" with a *g* interpolated, very possibly by a "nigger" compositor unacquainted with Roman history. In a Natal newspaper, "Here I sit in this "quiet sequestrated (for sequestered) nook," suggests that possibly the neighbouring brook may have been in *liquidation*! The defunct *Natal Guardian* once spoke of the town "*bride*" for "*bridge*" as having been swept away by a flood, and on another occasion described certain ministers of religion as receiving only "£50 per annum and a *louse*."

The *Birmingham Gazette* of April 3, 1874, eulogized the

gallant conduct of the 42nd Regiment during the Ashantee War in their march through the "jumble," for "jungle." But what are we to make of such a real "jumble," as the following, from the *Natal Witness* of February 21, 1882 :—"The *face* of Mrs. Wood being in the gallery was well known to the court officials, as the *men* who administers the *vote* first looked to the gallery and then got ready a *chain*?" Why simply to substitute "fact" for "face," "man" for "men," "oath" for "vote," and for "chain" to place a "chair." But of a truth, this journal needs a glossary. Not a couple of months later, on April 6, 1882, we find it talking of "*oven-song*" at St. Saviour's Cathedral, Pietermaritzburg, and describing the subject of a Good Friday sermon preached there as being the "seven sayings of our Lord on the *Crops*." A month earlier, again, in two separate paragraphs fiercely

denunciatory of newspaper "bores," this Natal paper (on March 27, 1882) had for "bores" substituted the word "*Boers*," with an apparent fixity of malignant purpose which, under the circumstances, might have landed us in another Transvaal difficulty.

A propos to bores, however, how much might we write from bitter experience of the genuine newspaper bore, were not our theme the newspaper blunder! One anecdote our collection affords which connects the two subjects, so we need not apologize for giving it here. In certain old days of our journalistic experience, we had a meteorological bore who was the bane of our columns. He had all the attributes, poor man! of a hopeless specimen of his genus—a seedy appearance, a shuffling gait, a bad manner, a stubborn yet withal feeble loquacity, a cramped and indistinct handwriting.

If we didn't insert his voluminous communications, he denounced us personally and by letter as the enemies of scientific progress ; so we were obliged to give him a certain amount of rope. Yet his prognostications were hardly ever even approximately accurate, and we sighed for the hour of deliverance. It came about in this wise. One very wet day, when the streets of our little town were exceptionally foul and filthy, he came out in our "valued columns," in the course of a wordy disquisition on his theories, with the astounding assertion that "the direction of the *mud* would cause the atmospheric pressure to rise or fall in a few hours." We had to explain next day that "mud" was an untoward misprint for "wind ;" but that newspaper blunder had done its work. Whether it was that our friend had his doubts as to the accidental character of the misprint, or whether he got too

severely chaffed upon the subject of his "meteorological mud," we know not. But we neither saw him nor heard from him more.

How effectually the misplacement of a letter can turn the sublime to the ridiculous may be instanced by the *Natal Mercury* of July 16, 1883. The writer had been waxing sublime about the flight of the condor, and, having got that unwieldy bird far up into the clouds, was proceeding to bring him down again when the mishap occurred. "In these pure fields of ether," the description reads, "unvisited even by the thunder-cloud, the condor delights to sail, and with piercing and all-pervading eye surveys the surface of the earth, towards which *she* never stoop *his* wing unless at the call of hunger." Cursed fatality, which uncoupled that letter *s* from the end of "stoop" to prefix it to "he" !

It seems almost impossible sometimes to correct a misprint. The paper just quoted had a leading article in its issue of June 21, 1883, in which mention was made of the world's "wonted tokens of *ambiguity*." Next day, the paper contained the following paragraph :

ERRATUM.—The word "ambiguity" in our second leading article yesterday, should have been "anti-guity."

and the day afterwards :

DOUBLE ERRATUM.—The unknown word "antiguity" in a local paragraph yesterday professing to correct the word "ambiguity," should have been "antiquity."

That was a quaint misprint in the *Mauritius Planters' Gazette* of July 23, 1883, occurring at the very time of the

French doings in Madagascar and Cochin China, which attributed to the French authorities a suspicion that the English missionaries in Madagascar had "TONQUIN" in the lining of their coats, the word *Tonquin* having been *tanguin*, a well known Madagascar vegetable poison. To the French element in the same newspaper must be attributed the blunder which describes an English wine merchant's stock as consisting of "Brandy, Gin, Whisky, *Port Sherry*, and Quinine Sherry." Mr. Edmund Yates in the *World* of May 10, 1882, complained that his printers in the previous issue made him accuse Lowell of saying that "Emerson ruins common sense with mystical hues " whereas "ruins" should have been "rims." This might remind one of Moore's couplet:

When I talked of the beauties of freshly blown roses,
The nasty things printed it freshly blown noses.

As for misprints in poetical quotations, who can forget the inimitable one attributed to an Irish source :

O Caledonia, stern and wild,
Wet nurse for a poetic child.

A journalist, writing in a magazine, tells an amusing story of a young Maynooth student who contributed some notes to an Irish journal of his travels in Spain. The cold reception accorded him by his rector on his return he was lucky enough to trace to the accidental substitution of an *a* for an *o* in a word employed in one of his letters. He had indulged in some high-flown epistolary raptures over the "gorgeous domes of Salamanca," and they printed it "dames." The same magazine writer, in mourning over the constant substitution of one letter for another in which compositors indulge,

describes feelingly the fate of a little *entrée* receipt to which he had treated the readers of his journal, being himself a bit of a *gourmet*. The carefully noted particulars as to ingredients and cooking were supplemented with the customary injunction "Serve it hot." But he stood aghast next day when "Serve it not" was the compositor's suggestive summing up of the merits of his gastronomic recommendation.

Fruitful as is the theme of newspaper blunders in literals, we have room for but two more specimens from the abundant stores of our collection.

In February last year, the Rev. Dr. Hole lectured in Cape Town upon Dr. Newman's life and writings. The *Cape Times* of February 22, 1883, reported the lecture pretty fully, and, in touching upon the Tractarian movement at Oxford, repre-

sented the lecturer as stating that Newman, "having enlisted the help of kindred spirits to his own, the publication of the tracts proceeded until the issue of 'No go,' which startled all England and brought down upon Newman a protest from those in the university." In "No go" will be detected with some amusement, a colonial rendering of the famous tract "Number Ninety"—in the manuscript "No. 90"—whence the error.

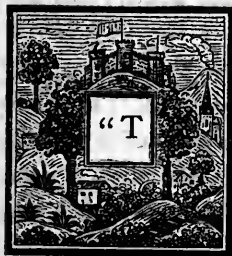
And now for our last. The late Mr. George Dawson, of Birmingham, whilst Editor of the *Birmingham Morning News*, attended the Shakesperian anniversary dinner held at Stratford in 1871, and with his customary eloquence proposed the toast of the evening,—“The memory of the Immortal Bard.” It was indeed too bad that Mr. Dawson's *own journal* of next day (*Birmingham Morning News*, April 24, 1871), by

the unfortunate dropping out of one single letter, *t*, from the type, should have represented him, in the crowning period of his postprandial eloquence, as calling upon the company to “drink to the memory of that *immoral* man.”



CHAPTER IV.

BLUNDERS OF "LIFTING."



HERE is confusion worse than death" writes my lord Tennyson, and the statement might well furnish its poetical heading, were poetical heading wanted, to a chapter which deals with that most terrible of newspaper blunders, known as "the mix." It originates generally, as we have before noticed, during the process of correcting or making additions to the type already

set in the "galleys," when certain lines have to be "lifted" bodily out of those grooves or frames, for the purpose of correcting something in them, or of inserting other lines amongst, or before, or after them. It can readily be understood that, whilst these changes are being effected by the printer, a line, or possibly a half-dozen lines bodily, may get accidentally transposed or misplaced; but the dire effects which often ensue to sense must, indeed, be seen to be fully believed. Where mere nonsense is the result, there is not so much harm done, because nonsense stands confessed as such, and, in a measure, explains itself. This, for instance, is what appeared one day in a Birmingham paper, under the heading "Court News:"

It is anticipated that the Queen will return been made at the Castle. According to the latest arrangements, Her Majesty will leave to Windsor from Sandringham to-day, and preparations for Her Majesty's reception have already Windsor for Osborne on Tuesday next.

A little reflection would commend to the reader the fact that these lines should read in the order 1, 4, 5, 2, 3, 6. The following, from the *Windsor Gazette* of April 2, 1881, may similarly be soon deciphered, but there are gleams of irreverent humour about the false reading of two of the lines. The paragraph states, with regard to a funeral sermon preached in St. George's Chapel, that "the Canon

in residence the Hon. and Rev. Lord Wriothlesley able text, Samuel xx. 3, "As thy soul liveth there is Russell, preached an admirable sermon from a remark-but a step between me and death."

A curious instance of this class of blunder occurred in the *Lady's Pictorial* of October 1, 1881. Two thrilling accounts of weddings got sadly mixed up by the accidental transposition of one line from the bottom of the first of three columns to the bottom of the third. The accounts *should* have read, in one case, "The costumes of the ladies were of "pale blue sateen and lace, with sashes to match, lace hats "with cream-coloured roses and *peau de Suède* gloves, and they "carried rustic baskets of moss and roses," and, in the other case, "An interesting marriage was celebrated on September "21 in the Roupell Park Wesleyan Church, the first that has "taken place in that edifice, between Mr. Louis Donald and "Miss Armitage." But unfortunately, the mere slipping out and transposition from the bottom of one column to the bottom of another of the single line, "Suède gloves, and they

"carried rustic baskets of moss and " caused the first account to read, "The costumes of the ladies were of pale blue sateen "and lace, with sashes to match, lace hats with cream-coloured "roses and *peau de roses*;" and the other, "An interesting "marriage was celebrated on September 21 in the Roupell "Park Wesleyan Church, the first that has taken *Suède gloves* "and they carried rustic baskets of moss and place in that edifice "between Mr. Louis Donald and Miss Armitage." May nothing more serious *ever* come between them!

An English country newspaper, by an unfortunate error in "lifting," cast an unmerited slur upon the memory of a poor fellow who died from an accident. The words in italics were, of course transposed:—"He was of *accidental* character, and "the jury returned a verdict of *excellent* death." The American *Providence Daily Journal* is accredited with an atrocious mix

which, though perpetrated just thirty years ago, lives still green in the memories of the older inhabitants. The paragraph had reference to a testimonial to a departing clergyman ; and another, descriptive of the erratic movements of a mad dog, got unfortunately engrafted upon it. After referring to the clergyman and his sad state of health, the paragraph ran on :

So the congregation resolved upon a European trip for their beloved pastor, and on Saturday made him acquainted with the delightful fact. Accompanying the report of the Committee was a nicely-filled purse, which was placed at the disposal of the pastor, who, after thanking them, made a turn down South Main Street as far as Planet, then up Planet to Benefit Street, where he was caught by some boys, who tied a tin pan to his tail. Away he went again, up Benefit Street, and down College, at the foot of which he was shot by a policeman.

America is suspiciously prolific in unauthenticated anecdotes of this species of blunder. "There is an awful state of affairs in a little Michigan town," says one paper, "where a compositor substituted the word 'widows' for 'windows.' The Editor had written 'The windows of the church need washing badly. They are too dirty for any use and are a disgrace to our village.'" Another journal declares that "In making up his pages the foreman of a Montreal paper mixed an article on Catholic advances in Africa with a recipe for making tomato catsup, and has been dodging the editorial shot-gun ever since. As published, the article reads :

The Roman Catholics claim to be making material advances in Africa, particularly in Algeria, where they have as many as 185,000 adherents and a Missionary.

Society for Central Africa. During the past three years they have obtained a firm footing in the interior of the continent, and have sent forth several missionaries into the equatorial regions. They are accustomed to begin their work by buying heathen children and educating them. The easiest and best way to prepare them is to first wipe them with a clean towel ; then place them in dripping-pans and bake them till they are tender. Then you will have no difficulty in rubbing them through a sieve, and will save them by not being obliged to cut them in slices and cook for several hours.



CHAPTER V.

BLUNDERS TELEGRAPHIC, AND OTHERS.



PON the whole, no doubt, the telegraph system in connection with the newspapers of the country works with accuracy and intelligence: but there are times when the mutual relations are somewhat strained. The man who, having wired for a "horse" to meet him at a country railway station was confronted with a "hearse,"

on his arrival there, was scarcely so nonplussed as we often were in our journalistic days, and that, sometimes, at the very dead of night, when it was too late to get a message repeated, and with the printers clamouring for copy. We well remember on one important occasion calling the whole strength of the literary staff of the paper into council over an undecipherable telegram, and even admitting our juvenile Robert the Devil to the solemn conclave, in case that babe and suckling might be found possessed of some spirit of interpretation unrevealed to his wiser and more prudent elders. "The speaker urged a compliment concerning the desiration of their cause at the hands of the execution"—so ran that perplexing message, which being interpreted—but *not* by our infant fiend—was found to be "The speaker urged a complaint concerning the desertion of their cause at the hands of the

executive." How essential it is that what there is of a foreign telegram should be absolutely correct and reliable, may be gathered from a consideration of the fact that, being from their nature and attributes highly succinct and condensed, such messages have, for the literary credit of a paper, to be elaborated into rounded and elegant phrases, which shall convey, if possible, more copious information than the few rough words of the message as flashed along the wires. Yet, how fatal that elaboration may prove if based upon erroneous premises, was instanced by the historic incident recording what once befel the leading journal. During Sir Arthur Kennedy's governorship of Queensland, the *Times*, so it is asserted, published what purported to be a telegram from that colony to the following effect: "Lady Kennedy has given birth to twins, the eldest being a son." Upon the publication of this news

there were not wanting kind friends to look in and suggest to the oracles of Printing House Square that, as Sir Arthur Kennedy happened to be unmarried, a mistake must be lurking somewhere. A repetition of this telegram, which had originally and before its elaboration run, "Governor Queensland twins first son" was ultimately demanded from Reuter's, with the result that the words really telegraphed by Reuter's agent at Brisbane were found to be "Governor Queensland turns first sod"—alluding to an intercolonial railway in course of construction, and to which some previous reference had been made!

In connection with advertisements, careful readers may often notice certain cabalistic letters and figures crouching in the corners of advertisement space in their newspaper. These serve as useful guides to the printer as to the days and

number of times of the advertisement's insertion, and, as long as they are kept within reasonable limits of prominence, they cannot be held to fall within the category of blunders. But kindred private directions in type are sometimes used in the news department of a journal, to indicate, let us say, the order of arrangement of several classes of news under one general heading; and when *these* directions go beyond the hand-press into the "forms" from which the paper is to be printed, they create blunders of a truth, although instances of them are rare. When the Commune was instituted in Paris, *Aris's Birmingham Gazette* contained a Communistic Proclamation, into the very middle of which this mysterious line was interpolated.

fol tel headed Proclamation of the Commune

a private direction to the printer as to the order in which the Proclamation was to follow the telegram, and which was left in type inadvertently. Our collection also includes a reporter's description (in *Birmingham Morning News*, April 15, 1871) of some new public buildings, into the midst of which recital the word "applause" in brackets has wandered, heaven knows how, perhaps from some public speech in another column of the paper. There is also an instance of a repeated paragraph, looking absurd enough in type, from *Birmingham Gazette*, January 15, 1872 :

Mr. Giles (Birmingham) seconded the resolution,
which was carried.

Mr. Giles (Birmingham) seconded the resolution,
which was carried,

A copy of the *Natal Mercury*, published in February last

year, contains a critique upon the January number of "Art and Letters" published under the unaccountable heading "GERMAN TEXT." The explanation is that the sub-editor wished the critique to be set by the printer in the type bearing that name, and that by some strange oversight the printer took the sub-editor's direction to be the heading of the paragraph, and set it up as such, while no one subsequently discovered the error before the publication of the paper.

Coincidences cannot of course be reckoned amongst blunders, and yet newspaper coincidences are sometimes strange enough to be noticeable. At the first School Board election for the borough of Birmingham the denominational candidates, eight in number, were locally known as "The Eight." Our collection includes a Contents Bill of the *Birmingham Daily Post* of the period, which contains three lines in singular juxtaposition :

FEARFUL RAILWAY ACCIDENT.

EIGHT PERSONS KILLED.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EIGHT.

In Kingston, Jamaica, there exists, or existed, a firm of auctioneers consisting in a trio of partners. The firm was highly esteemed, and no one ever thought of attributing to the trio, or to any member of it, characteristics of a Darwinian descent more marked than those of their fellows. Yet a smile went round the community when the following advertisement appeared in the *Jamaica Budget* of June 16, 1879:

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* * * * *

We have glanced at certain varieties of newspaper blunders, and have adduced some illustrations out of many. To readers who have paid any previous attention to the subject, will occur many notable stories of blunders which are *not* recorded in this, perhaps, the first collection of published notes upon a very prolific subject. Our apology for these omissions must be, that we have sought less to record anecdotes of misprints, than to call in evidence authenticated instances of their occurrence such as have fallen under our own personal notice, and for which we were prepared to

furnish chapter and verse. For, although authenticated instances of telling misprints should be numerous enough (and we shall always be thankful for the means of increasing our own stock-in-hand of them), yet more frequent still is the anecdotal Newspaper Blunder of which it may be said, in the language of the old Italian proverb, *Si non e vero e ben trovato.*



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